

HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE



NEWS

Vol. I, No. 12, April, 1942

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DE PROFUNDUS CLAMAVI!

Out of the depth I have cried to Thee, O Lord! . . . Lord, hear my voice . . .

Trains. Aeroplanes. Cars. More of the same. Space. Thousands of miles of it. Fifteen thousand to be exact. Yes, that was the extent of the Lecture Tour I just finished. Twenty-two states and one hundred and twenty-two lectures given since last November.

White audiences. Colored audiences. A panorama of white and colored America before my mind. Seas of human faces. Depth of human minds and souls opened to my gaze. That is what I left behind, and at the same time brought back with me, deeply etched on my mind and soul.

Detroit. Cleveland. Cincinnati. Toledo. Chicago. Lafayette. Indianapolis. Kansas City. Tulsa. St. Paul. Minneapolis. Milwaukee. Chicago again. Rochester. Buffalo. Fall Rivers. Providence. Boston. Hartford. New Haven. New York . . . and many more.

A litany of names! A Rosary of cities! Little and big seas of white and colored faces! And now sitting at my desk looking through a large window at the ever changing street scenes of Harlem, with unseeing eyes, I cannot work. I am still there. In all and each of these cities. Talking. Listening. Learning. Answering questions. Hundred thousands of them . . . And in my heart—a rising, choking Fear.

For this was not a simple ordinary Lecture Tour, to tell of Friendship House works. To get new friends for it, or to raise money. At least, it did not turn out to be such. No. It became a painful pilgrimage, a witnessing of various clashing, fighting, currents of American thought. A sort of mental spiritual war—all its own, so much more significant and potent against the background of that other Worldwide Total Warfare of today.

And fear entered my heart. I knew that I had made it vulnerable to fear because I had to let love in before.

And when love comes, then pain and fear for the beloved follow—and are free to enter. And I had been in love for many years, with God and with America. I could not tell you how I fell in love with God. It would take too long. But I fell in love with America at first sight. It is so beautiful. It has so much to give. And because I am in love with both—God and America—I came to Harlem.

For on the beautiful face of America, can be discerned, the ugly patches of a disease, which if allowed to grow will eat all its beauty away, even unto its very soul. For America,

has chained its God into the Ghettoes. Denied Him the bread of Justice and the living water of Freedom. I speak of Christ in the Negro in the Harlems of America . . . He it was who had said . . . “Whosoever you do to the least of my brethren—*You Do to Me.*”

And fear rose higher in my heart. I sit by my desk and cannot work. For in my ears like the waves of an angry sea, the voices of the Negro in America roar. I have heard it in the twenty-two states. In fifty out of my one hundred and twenty-two lectures. Through all the fifteen thousand miles of covered space it cried out from its depth . . .

DE PROFUNDUS CLAMAVI . . .

DOMINE . . .

Listen, Christian White America, listen carefully to the voice of thy colored children. It is raised toward thee in despair . . .

IT SAYS:

Is this a War for the freedom of ALL men

Is this a War for Democracy?

Is this a War against Racism?

Is this a War for Christianity?

“Tell us White America, tell us, Thy Negro Children—if it is so. We have heard Thy words before, and we have not found it always true. We are asking you now agajin. Maybe because we are both human and weak—we want proof this time. We want to see and touch, the deeds that should flow from your words, if they be the Truth. Show Us . . .

For we are tired of the invisible yet killing shackles . . . given to us because our skin is dark.

For we are tired of standing idle in the Market Place, where no one hires us . . . because our skin is dark.

For we are tired of the terrible and heavy burden of poverty, ill health, lack of opportunities, that has been ours through all these years . . . only because our skin is dark.

For we are tired of the mind-searing, soul-killing shadow of Jim Crowism that greets us at birth, walks

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HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

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**CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY
IN AMERICA**

One of the social phenomena of this day is the disintegration of family life in Harlem. The increase of juvenile delinquency can be largely attributed to this disintegration. And the Negro Family presents a unique situation: in the majority of cases both mother and father work, and often only the mother works, since in the type of work open to Negroes—chiefly domestic work—women find employment more easily. In either case, the chief center of the home—the mother—is absent all or part of the day. So the father loses a great deal of what would be his rightful authority, the mother is away anyway and the child is left to roam the streets and pick up what it will or can. Thus the years go, finding the youth almost grown, with practically no moral or social restraints habitual with him, save those that crude adolescence enforces. What incentive to be good, what deterrent from being bad can he have? Finally, all the white boys and girls of his acquaintance are planning careers or more schooling or a good job in a desirable place; can go where they want, live where they want: they fully agree with the American way of life . . . and why not? For them, it means what it says. But for the colored boy or girl it is a dead end, even from the start. On the one hand they hear the radio, billboards, newspapers, magazines, teachers, clergymen, etc., constantly talking about the equality of opportunity that is every American's right — and on the other, they see the constant denial of the same. And so it can be seen that we people who directly or indirectly contribute to the conditions outlined here are helping the rate of young criminals to increase; and, aside from the rank injustice of this which cries to heaven for vengeance; aside from the fact that these discriminations are a flagrant violation of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, aside from these two important reasons, is the possibility that some day these factors may swing into a powerful modus for revenge that will be the natural vent for men who have harbored these injustices since 1619 when they were brought to America against their will.

Harlem is not the Negro race. Harlem is not a mirror of the Negro race. Harlem has a lot more interest and life and vividness and naturalness than other metropolitan locales, though generally speaking there are two things about Harlem that are not known. 1st: the large majority of Harlemites are hardworking, average Americans trying to keep their families together and bring them up right. 2nd: Harlem is a transient colony, to some extent, and so suffers from the irresponsibility that such communities are affected with. Since housing is so acute in Harlem, there are many Negroes who by income and inclination would prefer to live in a more

suburban area. But our 100% Americans see to it that they do not move into such places without a major fracas taking place — if they even get that far. Another erroneous opinion held by white people in this regard is that Negroes want to intrude into white neighborhoods because there are whites living there. Actually, like every other human being they merely want to live in a congenial atmosphere and to rear their children in a quiet decent place. A white American can do this, provided he has the money. No matter how much money he has, a Negro American can't, unless the white population moves away.

The condition of the Negro in American school life is no better than these conditions would forecast. In the South, where 11,000,000 of the 13,000,000 Negroes live, they are segregated. That is, the per capita investment for each Negro child is \$5 yearly, while for a white child it is 47 dollars yearly. The result?—inferior or ramshackle buildings, underpaid teachers, insufficient teachers and supervisors, broken down books and supplies — and all their very own! Of course the national average spent on each child in the U. S. yearly is roughly 87 dollars, but even if we were to double each allotment, Negro and white, it would still leave the money available for colored education negligible. In Harlem itself, broken down school buildings are the rule, though there are a few exceptions; school books are almost an anathema in some places — one class I saw had a dog-eared edition of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* that some brand new academic high school was discarding! Other mouthwatering titles being discarded by schools and sent to Harlem and the lower East Side are *Merchant of Venice* and *Essays for Interpretative Reading*. Further, the custom of sending the greenest, most inexperienced and unwilling teachers to schools that are situated in a sector of the population not yet assimilated to American life (the Puerto Rican section which borders on Harlem and is mixed up in Harlem, for example) and also, the policy of sending these same types of teachers to places where social unrest is tremendous and clashes are frequent is one of complete short-sightedness, a great waste, lost opportunities without number for real Americanization or assimilation, and, a boomerang that may come back at us, as we least expect it, one day. Practically, this is one place where we teachers could step into the breach. We could use Harlem schools as after school recreation centers and act as recreational assistants, vocational advisors, sports referees, leaders of arts and crafts and first aid groups, big brothers and sisters. It might be worked out so that eventually, these volunteer teachers might be replaced with substitute teachers, excessed teachers or WPA teachers and recreational leaders. Such would be a partial answer to the needs of Harlem, from a wide social viewpoint.

Hence, in education, in housing, in family life especially, we white Americans have something to ponder over, especially as we are now actively engaged in fighting against an aggressor who believes in the superiority of one race. "Charity begins at home." But this is more than charity; it supersedes charity. Justice, interracial justice is what we should work for, as believers that all men are created equal, as adherents to the Constitution of the United States, and as protagonists of a war for the triumph of Democracy.

ANN HARRIGAN, Grover Cleveland High School, Queens

—Reprinted from "Better Schools"

STAFF REPORTER

By M. K. J.

The deadline for this paper pops up with alarming regularity. We no sooner finish one issue then we find ourselves scurrying around for new material for the next number. Last month we were startled by the number of proof reading blunders we found in the finished product that was the Friendship House News. Our ego hit a new low, and while it might be good for our humility, it was a bitter pill to swallow. This month we intend to profit by our sad experience. We had our glasses changed and have taken a solemn vow to proof read the galley ten times . . . instead of two times as we did last month. And we hope to rebuild a lost faith in ourselves . . . and the type-setter.

Please note that we have a new masthead. For those who don't know what a masthead is (we just learned ourselves . . . and are casually throwing around printer's jargon) it's the heading on the top of the first page. This month it is hand lettered . . . and done by an artist who is a volunteer worker at Friendship House.

Easter has come and gone. During Holy Week, or at least from Wednesday on, Friendship House was closed. The Staff of FH scattered thru New York . . . and each Staff worker hied herself off to her favorite church for Mass and Tenebrae. We went to Mass on Easter Morning at our own church . . . which is St. Charles . . . and after Mass everyone went to Madonna Flat for an Easter Brunch.

Our Easter Brunch was definitely affected by the Russian influence. The baked ham and the eggs were strictly American . . . but the coolitch and the pascha made the meal International. Just in case you don't have a Russian Baroness in your home to celebrate Easter with . . . the pascha is a wonderful cream cheese filled with fruit. The coolitch is a very lush cake also filled with fruit.

The other noon we had an unexpected guest for lunch . . . and she proved so interesting that everyone kept still . . . and listened for a change.

Our guest was a Negro lady called Sara, and Sara's story is a fascinating one. About two years ago Sara discovered the Clothing Room and joined the long line of ladies who waited two mornings a week for a bit of wearing apparel.

However, Sara wasn't like the rest of the Ladies who waited patiently in line . . . she was a trouble maker

of the first water, to put it mildly. And what's more, she was usually getting over a hangover when she showed up at our place.

The other noon she told us . . . "I used to put my kid in school, and then I'd think about the Clothing Room and up I'd come. I didn't want nothin' . . . I just wanted to make trouble. I remember Mis' O'Donnell would pick out something nice for me, and I'd say, 'I don't want that ole thing. I want something else for my kid who ain't got no clothes to wear to school.' And I'd fuss and fuss. I just wanted to be ornery."

Sara went on to say that no matter how ornery she was Mis' O'Donnell was always nice to her. And Sara who belonged to the 'jumpin' church began to think 'them Catholics had somethin'.'

Everyone continued to be nice to Sara and to talk to her . . . so Sara stopped hitting the bottle. One day a sobered up Sara expressed a desire to become a Catholic. So she took instructions and in a few months she was received into the Church.

However . . . that wasn't all. Sara became a proselytizer thru the length and breadth of Harlem. She distributed Catholic magazines to the mothers who brought their children to play in the park, and then she brought them to church. On Xmas morning after going to Midnite Mass, she got up at five o'clock to stoke the furnace for her Super so that he could go to Mass, P.S. The gentleman was not a Catholic.

One morning at Mass she found an old lady crying in her pew. So Sara asked her what was wrong. The old lady . . . between her sobs . . . said that she had been going to the Catholic Church for ten years but didn't know 'how to get in!' Sara took her in tow and next month her protegee will be baptized.

Sara is not only a proselytizer, she is a philosopher. She said, 'You white folks done too much for the Negro. In the south you kinda babied him and made him dependent on you. In the north you eddicated him and then let him be. The Negro has to help himself, and no white folk can do it for him . . . but after he has learned to help himself . . . you can give him a break.'

We enjoyed having Sara with us, and we learned a lot from her. And incidentally, the reason that Sara had lunch with us was because she is now a volunteer worker in that place where she used to 'vent her ornerness . . . the Clothing Room.'

**THE BARONESS
JOTS IT DOWN**

Did you ever feel like a cat who had swallowed a pint of cream? You did! That is nice, for now you know how we all feel. The Friendship House News DID COME OUT — PRINTED, and evidently, you our friends, liked it, for you wrote us so many nice letters about it. Thank you!

True, the spacing could have been better. And the layout was not all that it could have been, either. The type should have been larger, but what of it? We WENT TO PRESS, and you liked us in our new dress. So we are happy.

True, Mary Jerdo, came back from the Printer, with inky smudges all over her flushed face and quite worried by the new terminology, he had showered her under. But the paper did come out. And it was her first job. The next issue will be better. Before you know it, Mary will be an accomplished 'lay-outer.' There is always a first time. And it was exciting to see another dream come true.

Why does one have to pay for eggs, milk and soft soups? That was the question I was vainly trying to answer last week. There was so little money in Friendship House treasury, and there also was old, fragile, lovely Mrs. C. a neighbor of ours, and were you to ask me, have I ever met a Saint, unhesitatingly I would have answered, "Yes I have, she is a Colored lady, Mrs. C." For that is what she is. We all go to her for advice. And so do many nuns and priests, she is that kind.

Also she is very sick. With a serious intestinal ailment, that just allows her to eat only—eggs, milk and soft soups, and as you know these cost money and she hasn't any. And we have so little. Eight dollars a month, would cover the cost. But eight dollars are eight times one, and that is a lot for both of us. Do you know someone who can spare that much for a few months?

And speaking of money. Did we ever tell you how much it takes to run Friendship House? I did not! What an oversight on my part, do forgive me. It costs from ten to twelve thousand a year. Almost a THOUSAND OR OVER, a month. How do I get it? Oh! There are many ways. The first, though is to go to church and talk it over with the Holy Ghost, St. Francis, Blessed Martin or any other Saint.

Let me tell you a story about that
(Continued on Page 4)

DE PROFUNDUS CLAMAVI

(Continued)

with us through life and even haunts us in death . . . because our skin is dark.

If you mean what you say, White America, on the pages of your school books, in your National Anthem that you sing, in the constitution that you cherish, in the words, that you throw out today in your hour of need, to the four winds, so many seeds, into the souls of your children . . . If you mean what you say — PROVE IT TO US TOO . . . and then, we Thy Negro children, as one will arise and fight as well as die for OUR America with a song on our lips. For we love her much—even now. BUT DON'T KILL THIS LOVE WHITE BROTHER.

Thus was the Negro of America speaking to me, through that fateful Lecture Tour. And I repeat his words to you, our readers, only because I love God and America so much that I live in Harlem.

Listen carefully, White Catholic America, to the voice of your Negro brother before it is too late . . . For already there can be heard a sinister small whisper in the dark corner of the Harleme of America that says—"This is a White Man's War. It is not ours . . . Don't let that whisper grow strong, the race is loyal. The Race loves America still. Don't kill that loyalty, nor stab that love to death, White Man."

Listen, for Christ in the Negro is there too . . . Listen before it is too late . . .

Out of the depths I have cried O Lord . . . Listen to my voice . . .

POPE PIUS XII

*Letter of November 12, 1939
to the American Hierarchy*

"We confess that we feel a special paternal affection, which is certainly inspired by heaven, for the Negro people dwelling among you; for in the field of religion and education we know that they need special care and comfort and are very deserving of it. We therefore invoke an abundance of heavenly blessing and we pray fruitful success for those whose generous zeal is devoted to their welfare."

THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

(Continued)

One day I was sitting by my large window in the library, musing on how to raise \$30.00 a month to start a Club for the Little Tots who are always playing on the street—which everyone will agree, is no place for little ones to be playing on . . . Well, there was one of them, right out there on the pavement, playing with a lovely red ball. And the ball ran away from her into the street, and she after it, and there was a huge truck. And then . . . there was a noise of brakes, a scream, and a little while later, just a red ball lying in the gutter.

Something broke in me then! The pain that was in my heart became unbearable. I went to Church, and told the Holy Ghost about the girl, the red ball, the truck, proving to Him beyond doubt that we SHOULD have a Clubroom for Little Tots . . . And being in pain, I guess I forgot my manners and added, "Please, Holy Ghost, you see how it is. We need that \$30.00 right away, air mail, special delivery." Then remembering to whom it is I was talking, I apologized and left it to His most Holy will.

Three days later, in the mail box was a letter, from the Canal Zone,

from a lady I had never heard of before. The letter was air-mailed special delivery. It said — "Dear Friend, my cousin a priest, has been visiting us, and telling about your work in Harlem and your needs. I have decided to send you \$30.00 per month for them . . ."

Yes, it takes a thousand dollars and over to run Friendishp House. How do we get it? Oh! There are many ways, but the first is to go to Church and talk it over with the Holy Ghost . . . I don't think that you would be interested in the other ways . . . after my little story. Or would you?

Total War, calls for TOTAL charity for the great World Tragedy, has not stopped the smaller individual ones such as found in Harlem, it has enhanced them!

So our NEEDS are growing URGENT. Desperately we call on your total CHARITY for: MONEY, CLOTHING, RELIGIOUS ARTICLES, BOOKS, MAGAZINES, FOOD, such as: RICE, FLOUR, COFFEE, MACARONI, IN A WORD — STAPLES. THANK YOU!

We are never satisfied. We wanted a thousand subscriptions so that we could print the *FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS*. Now we want a thousand more so that we can continue printing it. Will you help us? You can do it by interesting your friends in our paper and by renewing your subscription to it. Subscription price is only fifty cents a year! Maybe it's wishful thinking, but if each of our present subscribers got ONE new subscriber what a wonderful circulation we'd have!

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